



A just weight
and balance



are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- Matthew 5:10

- *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

- According to The Pew Research Center, [over 75% of the world's population](#) lives in areas with severe religious restrictions.

According to the United States Department of State, Christians in more than [60 countries](#) face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

EACH MONTH

322 CHRISTIANS ARE
KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH



214 CHURCHES AND
CHRISTIAN **PROPERTIES**
ARE DESTROYED



772 FORMS OF **VIOLENCE**
ARE COMMITTED AGAINST
CHRISTIANS (SUCH AS BEATINGS, ABDUCTIONS,
RAPES, ARRESTS AND FORCED MARRIAGES)



Persecuted:

Those who are
harassed, hunted,
as

wild beasts pursued
by hunters.

Persecution

is as old as mankind for
in that first family upon earth
we learn that
Cain slew Abel.

**"Because his own works
were evil, and his brother's
righteous"**
(1 John 3:12).

- Then it appeared in the family of Abraham.

- Ishmael,
born after the flesh,
persecuted Isaac,
born after the Spirit
(Galatians 4:29).

- The seven characteristics
of the “*Beatitudes*”
as described by Jesus
are but a
kick in the teeth
of the world.
- A kick of which they will not
“*turn the other cheek.*”

- Our study has been regarding the beautiful character of the Christian which Christ has called **Blessed**.
- But **how** could such beautiful features of character provoke persecution?

- To this the following answers should suffice:

***"Every one that doeth evil
hateth the light,
neither cometh to the light,
lest his deeds
should be reprov'd."***

(John3:20)

- **"There is yet one man**
(said wicked Ahab
to good Jehoshaphat),
***by whom we may inquire
of the Lord:***

- **but I hate him;**
***for he never prophesied good
unto me,
but always evil"***
(2Chronicles 18:7).

- Matthew 5:11

Blessed are ye,

when men shall revile you,
and persecute you,
and shall say all manner
of evil against you falsely,
for my sake.

- One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus was his sheer honesty.
- He never left men in any doubt what would happen to them if they chose to follow him.
- He was clear that he had come "not to make life easy, but to make life great."
(John 10:10)

- It is impossibly hard for us to realize what the first Christians had to suffer.
- Every department of their life was disrupted.

- Christianity might well disrupt their work.

- Suppose a man was a stone-mason.

(a harmless enough occupation.)

- But suppose his firm received a contract to build a temple to one of the heathen gods,
what was that man
to do?

- Suppose a man was a **tailor**, and suppose his firm was **asked to produce robes for the heathen priests**,
- What was that man **to do**?

- The Church was in no doubt where a man's duty lay.
- On one occasion a man came to Tertullian with this very problem.
- He told of his business difficulties.
He ended by saying,
"What can I do? I must live!"
 - "Must you?"
said Tertullian.

- If it came to a choice between a loyalty and a living, the TRUE Christian never hesitated to choose loyalty.

- Christianity would certainly **disrupt their social life.**
 - In the ancient world most feasts were held in the temple of some god.
 - One of the gods most commonly worshipped was **Serapis**

- And when the invitations to the feast went out, they would read:
 - ***"I invite you to dine with me at the table of our Lord Serapis."***

- Even an ordinary meal might begin with a cup of wine, poured out in honor of the gods.
- It was like grace before a meal.

- Could a Christian participate in a heathen act of worship like that?
- Again the Christian answer was clear.

- The Christian **must remove himself** from his friends rather than by his presence give approval to such a thing.
- A Christian had to be prepared **to be lonely in that world.**

- Worst of all,
Christianity
was liable
to disrupt their
home life.

- A wife might become a Christian while her husband did not.
 - A son or a daughter might become a Christian while the rest of the family did not.
 - Immediately there was a split in the family.
- Often the door was shut forever in the face of the one who had accepted Christ.

- Christianity often came to send, not peace, but a sword which divided families in two.

- It was literally true that a man might have to love Christ more than he loved father or mother, wife, or brother or sister.

(Luke 14:26)

- Christianity often involved
in those days
a choice between a man's
nearest and dearest
and Jesus Christ.
- Would **you** or **I**
be up to the
challenge?

- Still further,
the penalties
which a Christian
had to suffer were
terrible beyond
description.

- We may well ask why the Romans persecuted the Christians.
- It seems an extraordinary thing that anyone living a Christian life should seem a fit victim for persecution and death.
 - There were two reasons.

- # 1 There were certain rumors which were spread abroad about the Christians.
- Rumors for which the Jews were in no small measure responsible.

- The Christians were accused of cannibalism.
- The words of the Last Supper -- "*This is my body.*"
 - "*This cup is my blood*" were taken and twisted into a story that the Christians sacrificed a child and ate the flesh.

- The Christian weekly meeting was called the Agape or “The Love Feast”; and the name was grossly misinterpreted.
- And the “kiss of peace” became a ground on which to build slanderous accusations.

- # 2 Christians were accused of being revolutionaries.

- It is true that they spoke of the coming end of the world,

- Clothing their message in the apocalyptic pictures of the end of the world in flames.

- Their enemies took these words and twisted them into threats against the Roman government.

- But the great ground of persecution was in fact political and involved the worship of the goddess Roma,
the spirit of Rome.
- Also Emperor worship became, not voluntary, but compulsory.

- Once a year a man/woman had to go and burn a pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar and say, "*Caesar is Lord.*"
- And that is precisely what the Christians refused to do.

- Having burned a pinch of incense one received a certificate, a libellus, to say that the had done so, and then they could go and worship any god.

- Christians
refused to conform.
- Confronted
with the choice,
"Caesar or Christ?"
- For the Christian
there was no choice.

- The result for the Christian was that however fine a citizen they were they were automatically an outlaw.

- The Roman Empire **could not afford disloyalty** and that is exactly what every Christian congregation appeared to the Roman authorities to be.
- **Their only crime** was Christ.

- The first
New Testament Christians
never doubted

Christ's ultimate triumph.

- Facing savage
persecution

they never doubted
the eventual victory.

- Hebrews 11:36

And others had trial of

- *cruel mockings*

- *and* *scourgings,*

- *yea, moreover of*

- *bonds and imprisonments:*

- Hebrews 11: 37

- *They were stoned,*

- *they were sawn asunder,*

- *were tempted,*

- *were slain with the sword:*

- *they wandered about in sheepskins*

- *and goatskins;*

- *being destitute, afflicted,*

- *tormented;*

- Hebrews 11:38

(Of whom the world was not worthy:)

- *they* wandered in deserts,
- *and* in mountains,
- *and* in dens
- *and* caves of the earth.

- Certain that the power of the resurrection

would be the power
that would raise them
to

immortal life again.⁴³

- His victory was bought with blood
so why should
their loyalty not be
stained
with blood.

- The only crime of the Christian was that they set Christ above Caesar.
- And for that supreme loyalty Christians died in the thousands.

- It may seem an extraordinary thing to talk about the “bliss” of the persecuted.

- For those who had eyes to see beyond the immediate present,
- And a mind to understand the greatness of the issues involved,
 - there was glory
in that blood-stained way.

- **“The Way of The Cross Leads Home”**
I must needs go home
by the way of the cross,
- There’s **no other way** but this;
 - I must needs go on
in the blood sprinkled way,
 - The path that
the Savior trod,
 - If I ever climb to
the heights sublime,
 - Where the soul is
at home with God.

- To have to suffer persecution was an opportunity to show one's loyalty to Jesus Christ.
- One of the most famous of all the martyrs was Polycarp.

- Standing before **Roman tribunal.**
- Polycarp was given the **inevitable choice**
 - Sacrifice to the godhead of Caesar **or die.**

- ***"Eighty and six years,"
"have I served Christ
and he has done me no wrong.***
- ***How can I blaspheme my King
who saved me?"***
 - Here was the
supreme opportunity
to demonstrate his loyalty
to Jesus Christ.

- There are two armies in this world:
 - One for Christ and one for Satan.
(Rev 19:19)
- Every conversion Satan accounts to be desertion.

- Millions were thrown to the lions because they worshiped not the gods of Rome.

- Million more were burned at the stake, because they bowed not to the idolatries of papal Rome.

- "From the birth of Popery in 606 to the present time (1871), it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than fifty millions of the human family, have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors...
- "History of Romanism," pp. 541, 542. New York: 1871.

- But rejoice,
suffering saints,

for the kingdom of heaven
is yours.

- Rejoice, for your fiery trials shall
“purify you as gold in the furnace”,
and make you meet
for the great reward in heaven.
(1 Peter 1:7)

- **Rejoice**

for your sufferings

identify you with

the prophets

and noble army of martyrs,
who have already
marched through
the flames to glory.

- There are so many of us who have never in our lives made anything like a real sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

- To have to suffer persecution
is,
as Jesus himself said,
the way to walk the same road
as the
prophets,
saints,
martyrs
have walked.
(Matthew 5:12)

- **Faith of our fathers**
- **Faith of our Fathers! living still**
 - **In spite of dungeon,
fire, and sword:**
- **We will be true to thee till death.**
 - **How sweet would be
their children's fate,**
 - **If they, like them,
could die for thee!**

- When a Christian is called on to suffer
 - That is a crucial moment;
- It is the great occasion;
- It is the clash between the world and Christ.

- It is a moment in the drama of eternity.

- To have a share in such a moment is not a penalty
but a glory.

- "Rejoice at such a moment,"
says Jesus,
"and be glad."

- The word for
“be glad”
is from
a Greek verb
which has been derived
from two Greek words
which mean
to leap exceedingly.

- It is the “*joy*” which leaps for joy.

- It is the joy of the climber

who has reached
the summit.

- To suffer persecution is to make things easier for those who are to follow.
- Today we enjoy the blessing of liberty because men in the past were willing to buy it for us at the cost of blood, and sweat, and tears.

- In the First World War Rupert Brooke, the poet, was one of those who died too young.
- Before he went out to battle wrote:
 - "***Now God be thanked who has matched us with his hour.***"

- **Memorial Day**

is observed to commemorate
all men and women
who have died
in military service for
the United States.



- When the Bolder Dam was completed the names of those who had died were put on a tablet and the tablet was put into the great wall of the dam, and on it there was the inscription.

- "These died that the desert might rejoice and blossom as the rose."

- No Christian ever suffers persecution alone.

- Hebrews 13:5

For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

- 13:6 **So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**

- We know well the story in Daniel of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were thrown into the fiery furnace heated seven times hot because of their refusal to abandon their God.

- The king who was watching said:..
**"Did we not cast three men,
bound, into the fire?"**
- Then came the astonished answer,
**"But I see four men, loose,
walking in the midst of the fire,
and they are not hurt; and the
appearance of the fourth
is like a son of the gods"**
(Daniel 3:19-25).

- There remains only one question to ask

- Why is this persecution so inevitable?

- Because the Church and the Bible are the conscience of the nation and society.

- Where there is good the Church must praise.
- Where there is evil, the Church must condemn.
- And inevitably men will try to silence the troublesome voice of conscience.

- **It is not likely**
that death awaits us
because of our
loyalty to the
Christian faith.

- But remember that it has not always been that way.
 - Saul persecuted David (1 Samuel 19:9-12),
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were persecuted because they refused to worship the image of the king (Daniel 3:1).

- Jezebel persecuted the prophets of the Lord.
 - The prophets Amos , Jeremiah, and others suffered persecution because they exposed sin in the lives of God's people.

- The **Psalms** speak of the righteous who were persecuted as a result of faith in God, and who prayed to God for deliverance

- As well as
 - Stephen
 - James
 - Peter
- Together with many anonymous martyrs who experienced the truth of the words of Jesus saying:
“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”
(John 15:20)

- Keep in mind that whole epistles like:
 - 1st Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation were written to encourage Christians in a situation of persecution

- Matthew 5:12
Rejoice, and be
exceeding glad:
for great is
your reward
in heaven:

**Doors of the church
are open.**

**Spirit & Bride Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17

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